Royal College of Occupational Therapists

RCOT2027

Guidance for submitting your abstract or session proposal

Submissions deadline: Midnight 21 December 2026

Here is your step-by-step guide to making your Annual Conference submission. We recommend having this open while you make your submission. The steps are:

1. Choose your submission type
2. Choose your presentation format
3. Add your submission content
4. Check your submission against marking criteria
5. What happens next

If your submission is successful we will support you with guidelines and online online presenter briefing session to help you to prepare for and present your session.

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Before you start

Key point:
Before making your submission check that you are available to attend both days of the Annual Conference, that you will have the funds to purchase your presenter's ticket and (if relevant) that you have your manager's support. People listed as main authors must be prepared to present the submission in the event that the named presenter is unable to do so. **Up to two authors per submission will be eligible for the presenter registration rate.**

Important tips for using the submissions system

- To return to a previous screen click on the steps in the menu to the left as you progress. Do not use the "Back" button on your browser.
- You can "copy and paste" text for your submission into the system.
- Once you have added your author/s please confirm which author will be the primary contact to receive correspondence by ticking the "corresponding author" and which will be presenting. If both then tick as indicated. All authors will receive an automated submission receipt.
- Ensure that you click "DONE" after each section to save your entry.
- Where word count limits apply – the system will automatically check and display the word count. If word count limits are exceeded a message will appear beneath your entry to let you know.
- Keep to the word count. Any text over the set word count will be removed.
- Every step must be followed and the appropriate fields completed for your submission to be considered.
- You can go back and edit your submission(s) at any stage, up until the submission deadline of midnight on **21 December 2026.**
- There is more information on using the Ex Ordo submissions system in the system knowledge base. This is under "Need help?" on the main Ex Ordo page.
- You are responsible for the content and accuracy of your submission although RCOT retains the right to make editorial changes prior to publication in the final Book of Abstracts/Sessions.
- Avoid referencing the presentation format in the body of your submission in case you are allocated an alternative presentation type.
- We may try to contact you to discuss editorial changes. If we cannot get hold of you we will make changes according to our best judgement. These changes will be made to the final published text only and not in the submissions system.

Key point:
Your submission(s) must align with at least one of our five Annual Conference 2027 themes.

Step one: Choose your submission type (Track)

You can choose to submit an **abstract** or a **session proposal**:

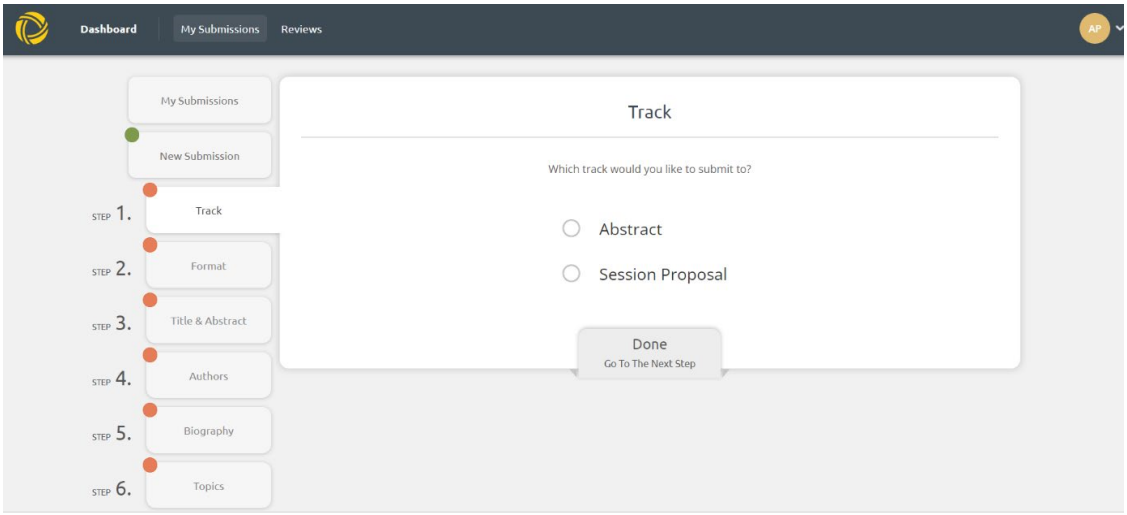

Image shows a screenshot of the first page of the submission portal titled 'Track'. This then allows you two options to choose from, Abstract or Session proposal.

Abstract

Choose from three abstracts categories. You'll select this later on in the submissions system:

Critical discourse (Abstracts only)

We welcome critical reviews of particular bodies of work, theories, or other professionally relevant concepts. These critical reviews need not contain empirical data or use systematic review methods, however critical analysis should be clearly evident. These presentations are intended to spur theoretical, philosophical or political discussion in order to challenge established thinking and introduce new perspectives. Submissions in this category may not provide definitive answers but will most certainly ask provocative questions.

Practice development (Abstracts only)

As occupational therapists we must take every opportunity to raise the profile of the profession and evidence what we do on a daily basis. Making a presentation about the development of practice is a key component of the quality agenda and the future development of the profession. Practice development abstracts will report on completed or ongoing practice development which will contribute tooccupational therapy's body of knowledge and which is NOT research. Whilst ongoing work is welcome,there **must be an indication that practice development has had a measurable impact**. Presentations can be made from any area of clinical or management practice and from any location - statutory, independent and private sector.

Research (Abstracts only)

These abstracts report on research that contributes to occupational therapy's evidence base and demonstrates rigorous design. You can submit research abstracts from all methodological perspectives. Ongoing research* is welcome, but there must be an indication that studies have, or will have, produced some data and there is evidence of data analysis.

*report on emerging findings from research that is currently in progress.

RCOT Early Researcher Award (Post-registration)

This prestigious prize recognises excellence in research and presentation skills. You are eligible to apply if you are:

- an **RCOT member**; and
- presenting a **Research paper** based on either:
  - your **post-registration Master's or doctoral research**, or
  - your **first ethically approved research project completed after registering as an occupational therapist**.

To be considered, select the eligibility tick box when submitting your abstract.

Key point:
Only Research category abstracts submitted to be presented as **Paper format** are eligible for this award. Bitesize learnings, PechaKucha and Session proposals presentation formats **are not eligible.**

Previous winners have been delighted with the peer recognition they've received on the significance of their research and the value of the award to their early research career development. Details of the winner will be published in OTnews and on the RCOT website.

Session proposal

Session proposals give you the opportunity to create more informal, creative and interactive sessions to engage, collaborate and encourage learning on content relevant to occupational therapy theory, practice, management, leadership, education, CPD or research. These sessions would work well as spotlights to champion the profession, celebrating achievements and sharing and discussing aspects of occupational therapy with others.

Perhaps you have a successful intervention in practice to demonstrate, a skill that others can be taught, or a simple passion for an activity that you would be happy to share? Would you like to discuss an issue that is important to you, have your ideas heard, or share a problem and invite solutions? Do you have an individual, a team, or a positive community story to share? What changes have you or your service made that have led to making a real difference to the lives of colleagues and/or the people you support, and to the profession? This is a great opportunity to have some fun with colleagues and peers!

Step two: Choose your presentation format

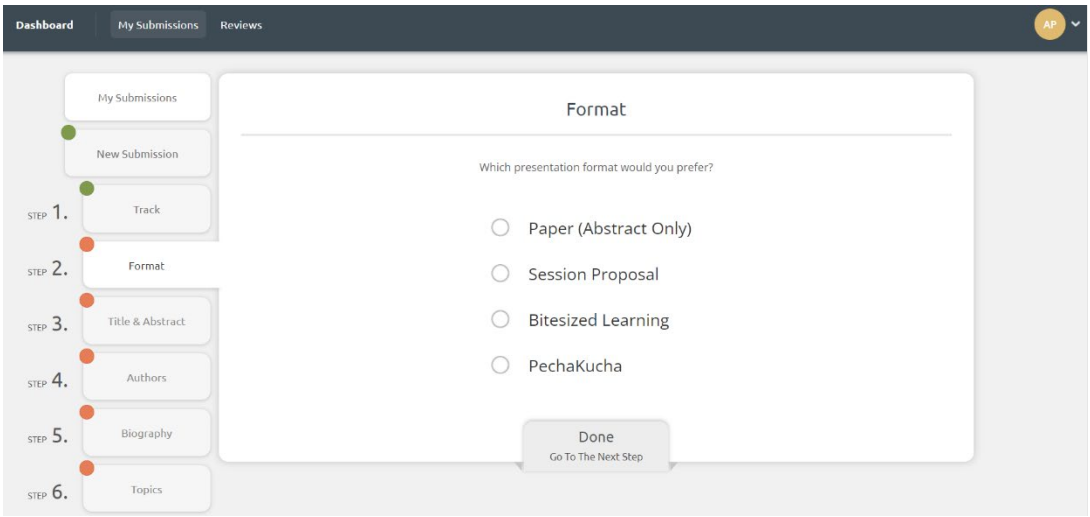

Image shows a screenshot of section two of the submission portal titled ‘Format’. It then shows four bullet point options, Paper (abstract only), Session proposal, Bitesized learning and PechaKucha.

Papers (Abstracts only)

What?

A paper is a more traditional form of conference submission. It is a good way of introducing your work in a structured concise manner and allowing some discussion with delegates. Papers will have a title, an introduction, objectives, a methods section, results/findings, discussion of findings, conclusion/recommendations, acknowledgments, and references. Find out more in the “Submission content” section below. You can only select ‘paper’ if you have previously selected abstract.

How?

You will have 25 minutes in total: 15 minutes to present your work followed by 10 minutes for questions.

Session proposals

What?

These presentations should include interaction and delegate participation, and be aimed at all delegates at all career levels. Session proposals submissions must have a clear aim, outline content and session plan. Find out more in the “Submission content” section below. Select “Session proposal” in step one “Track” of the submissions system.

How?

The maximum total time for this session including Q&A will be 25 minutes. We recommend that your session itself be 18-20 minutes long, with the remaining time being for a live Q&A with delegates. There will be a chair for your session who will guide you through the Q&A.

When completing your session plan, please consider any activities, equipment or space requirements within your session, as these may require the organisers to restrict delegate numbers to ensure a safe and effective learning experience.

Bitesized learnings

What?

Bitesized learning presentations provide an opportunity to share innovative practice, research, service developments or projects in a concise and accessible format.

We recommend this format if you would traditionally have chosen a poster presentation.

Similar to a lightning talk, this format provides an excellent opportunity to share key messages, receive feedback and engage in meaningful discussion with delegates. You may also use the session to identify delegates interested in your work and arrange a meeting or agree a meeting point during the conference to continue conversations and build professional connections.

How?

Each Bitesized learning session will last 10 minutes, allowing you to present your work in a concise and engaging format. We recommend planning for approximately five minutes of presentation followed by five minutes for quick questions, discussion and audience interaction.

You may choose to present a short slideshow, display a digital poster on screen, or use a combination of visual materials and supporting resources. We encourage the use of QR codes linking to additional content, such as reports, videos, guidance, websites or your contact details, enabling delegates to explore your work further after the session.

PechaKucha

What?

Are you up for the challenge of our exciting PechaKucha method presentation?
PechaKucha is a presentation format that uses 20 slides or images that are displayed for 20 seconds each. The slides will move automatically as you speak. This engaging and dynamic format is unique and memorable for delegates. It challenges you to be concise and keep your presentation fast, light and engaging, and supports you to stay on topic. This is around six and a half minutes of presentation. There will also be a live Q&A with delegates. This PechaKucha session cannot exceed 15 minutes overall.

How?

You will have up to ten minutes for your presentation plus a further five minutes for live Q&A. You will have a chair who will guide you through your Q&A.

Step three: Add your submission title and body text (Title & Abstract)

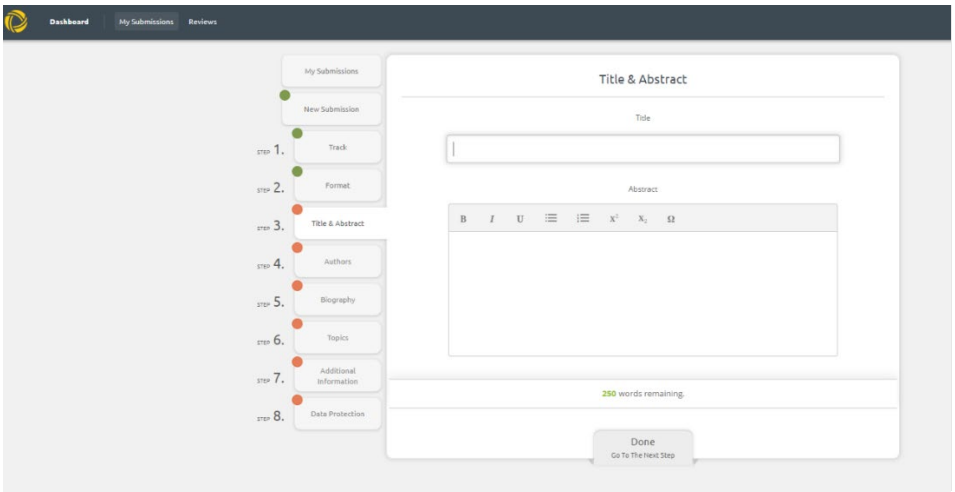

Image shows a screenshot of section 3 of the submission portal titled ‘Title & Abstract’. There are then two free text boxes for each section.

There are some differences to the information required depending on the submission type - abstract or session proposal - and abstract category, for example research or critical discourse. Use this guide and key points to complete your submission.

Title

Your submission title is important as this is what will encourage and help delegates to select your session. The title should be succinct yet accurately describe its main content and format. Do not include abbreviations. Use sentence case - the first letter of the sentence is capitalised with the rest being lower case except for proper nouns and acronyms.

Key point:
You must keep to the original title and content of your submission when presenting.

We will publish the title of accepted submissions in the programme on the Annual Conference website and in the book of abstracts/sessions submissions. If your title does not meet the conference style requirements the organiser might amend it. If we cannot contact you then we will make changes according to our best judgements.

Main body content/text

The main body of the submission must be no longer than **250 words**, and must include the following:

For Session Proposals:

- Aim - What do you hope to achieve in the session?
- Outline content - What are the main points or topics you will be presenting or demonstrating? What is the relevance to occupational therapy theory, practice, management, leadership, education, CPD or research?
- Session plan - What will happen in the session? What will participants be expected to do? Are there any pre-requisites for joining? Are there any contra-indications?
- Resources - You will be responsible for supplying your own resources to lead your session and if relevant supply to your delegates. Your proposal should also cover whether the delegates would need space to move around while attending your session. These may require the organisers to restrict delegate numbers to ensure a safe and effective learning experience.

For Abstracts:

Key point:
All citations given in the main body of the submission **must** match those in the References section.

Practice development and Critical discourse abstract categories

- Aims - what does the work set out to achieve?
- Conclusion - what are the key take home messages?
- Background - what is the context for this work? You must demonstrate how your work has taken account of the context for current political / financial / professional / educational and/or theoretical drivers locally, nationally and/or internationally.
- Critical analysis - what are the key arguments that will be presented? What are the key questions posed by this submission?
- Relevance to occupational therapy education and/or practice.

Research abstract category

Information	Example
The problem – purpose and aims	The research question: • What was researched and its context - local / national / international? • What does this research add? • Why it is important to know more about the problem.
Design & Methods (how the research was undertaken)	Methodology. The research design. What was done? Who, what, when, where, how many, why these? How the data was analysed. Ethical issues encountered.

Information	Example
Results discussion	The key things that are now known that were previously not known. The evidence that shows how and why these came to be known. Explanation of how / why these key things came to be / are as they are.
Conclusion	Key point Findings and outcome Take-home message
Theory	Theories / theoretical resources used to analyse the results.
Impact / Implications	So what? Now what? What is the impact and/or the implications for OT practice and users of OT services or further research? Call to action (what, why, when, where etc.)
The Literature (optional)	The work that the research makes a contribution to.

Step four: Authors

Number of submissions per author

There is no limit to the number of submissions (abstracts or session proposals) that can be submitted by any individual or organisation. However, you can only make one submission per topic. The Annual Conference organisers reserve the right to limit the number of accepted submissions from any one source.

Key points:

People listed as main authors must be prepared to present the submission in the event that the named presenter is unable to do so.

Up to two authors per submission will be eligible for the presenter registration rate.

Author information for publication

(Screenshot on following page.)

Give the first name initial, first name, last name and affiliation (for example, institution name, place of work or location where work was carried out) of the main authors associated with the submission. For example: S, Sam, Jones, University of Somewhere. You do not need include degrees, titles or appointments.

You will need to supply your **contact email address**. We will use this email address for all correspondence relating to your submission and the event. We will not publish email addresses in the Book of Abstracts/Sessions Submissions.

Reminder: Before making your submission, check you're available to attend for both days of Annual Conference, you can pay for your ticket and your manager/organisation (if applicable) is happy for you to attend.

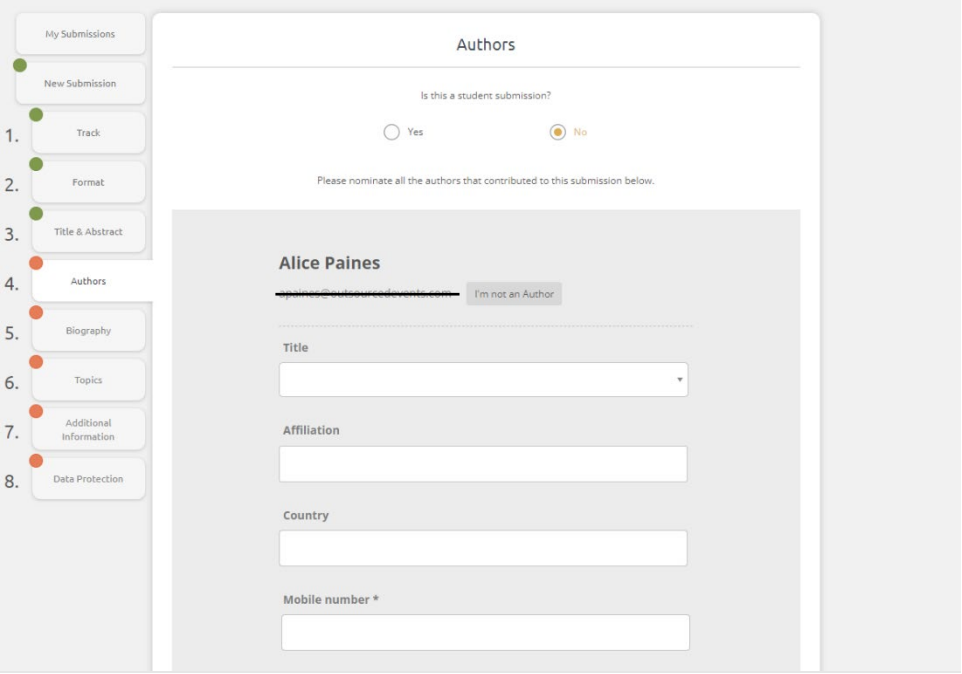

Image shows a screenshot of section 4 titled Authors. It then shows the text boxes that allow for information on each author such as title, affiliates, country, mobile number etc.

Step five: Biography (Authors)

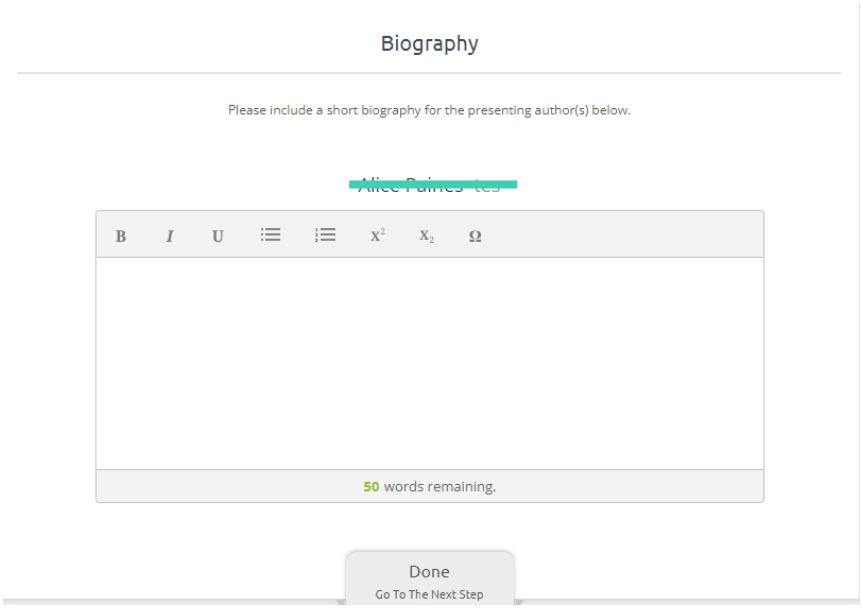

Image shows a screenshot of the Biography section which has a large free text box plus standard text editing tools e.g bold, italic, underline, bullet point etc. At the bottom is a button which reads 'Done. Go to the next step'.

Include brief information **relevant to your submission**, about the principal and second author/presenter - **maximum total of 50 words per entry**.

Step six: Keywords (Topics)

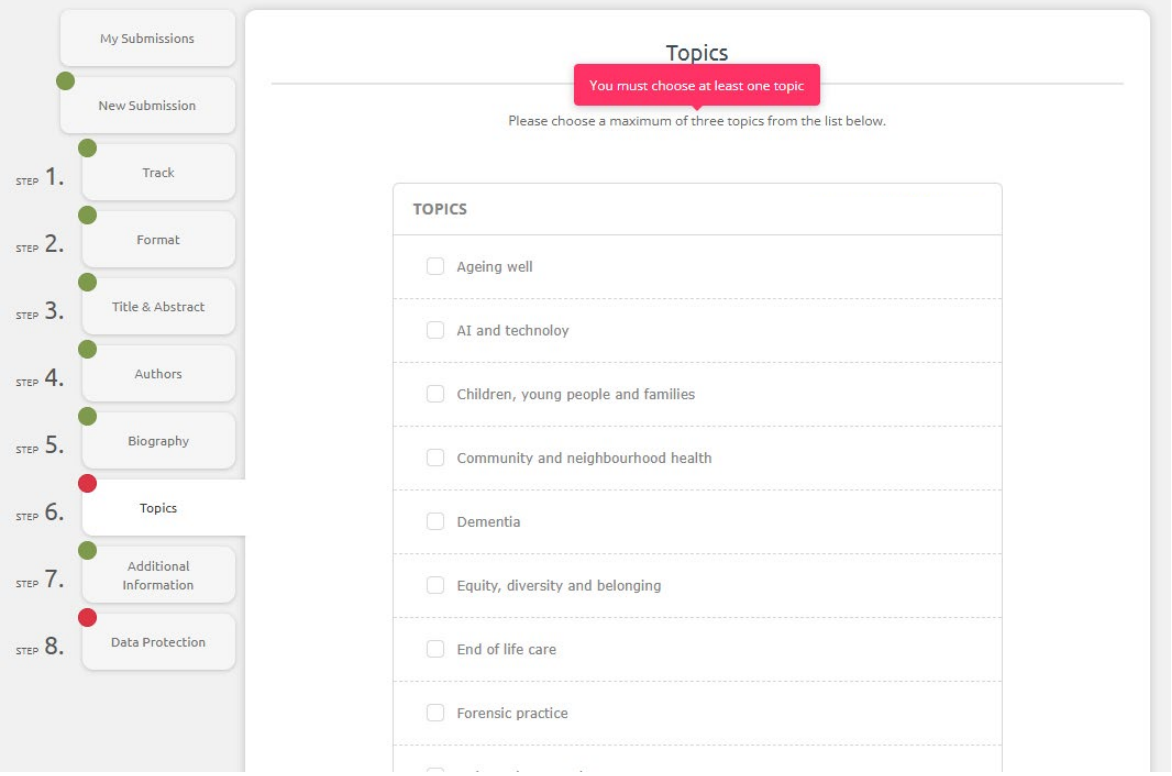

Image shows a screenshot of some of the topics (keywords) section on the submission portal with a list of key topics in alphabetical order.

Keywords

Include keywords to provide a clear indication of the focus of the presentation. Choose **at least one** keyword and a **maximum of three** from the following list:

Ageing well	Independent practice	Physical health
AI and technology	Leadership and management	Post registration education, learning and development
Children, young people and families	Learning disability	Pre-registration education
Community and neighbourhood health	Long term conditions	Research and innovation
Dementia	Mental health	Social care
Equity, diversity and belonging	Neurology	Support workers
End of life care	Occupational justice	Third sector/ charity/volunteers
Forensic practice	OT workforce	Work and health

Step seven: Additional information

Themes

You will need to select **one** of the five Conference themes for your submission. Choose the theme that best fits from the following list:

Theme	Examples of how these themes could be covered
Occupation, participation and communities	Occupational therapy plays a vital role in supporting healthier, more connected communities. This theme explores how occupational therapists enable participation through neighbourhood health and integrated community-based services. We welcome abstracts showcasing occupational therapy research, innovation and workforce planning in neighbourhood and community settings that improve participation, health and wellbeing. This includes the role of the independent sector, acute, specialist and tertiary services in early intervention and prevention in communities. This includes the role of the independent sector, acute, specialist and tertiary services in early intervention, prevention, population health and the development of healthy and sustainable communities.
Equity, justice and belonging	Participation should be possible for everyone. This theme explores how occupational therapy addresses barriers, reduces inequalities and creates more inclusive opportunities for people and communities to participate, contribute and belong. We welcome abstracts focused on occupational justice and addressing occupational deprivation, particularly in underserved communities and on creating more equitable and sustainable opportunities for participation, health and wellbeing.
Impact, evidence and improvement	Demonstrating impact is essential to strengthening the profession's profile, influence and value. This theme focuses on the outcomes occupational therapy achieves for individuals, communities, services and systems, and the evidence that helps demonstrate, improve and communicate that impact. We welcome abstracts exploring the impact of occupational therapy across all areas of practice, including independent, voluntary, education and community settings. Submissions may highlight outcomes for people, communities, services or systems and include evidence from research, innovation, quality improvement, entrepreneurship, service transformation, sustainably initiatives and economic evaluation.

Theme	Examples of how these themes could be covered
Future-focused occupational therapy	Occupational therapy is evolving in response to changing societal needs, changes in the make-up of the OT workforce, emerging technologies and new opportunities for practice. This theme explores the trends, innovations and developments that will shape the future of the profession and how occupational therapists can prepare for and respond to them. We welcome abstracts exploring innovation, technology, AI, emerging roles, entrepreneurism, workforce development, future models of care, sustainability, demographic change and new opportunities for occupational therapy practice, education and research. This includes environmental sustainability, sustainable occupations and occupational therapy's contribution to healthier and more sustainable futures.
Leadership, influence and system change	Occupational therapists play a key role in leading change, influencing decisions and shaping the future of services and systems. This theme explores both the impact occupational therapists have through leadership and advocacy, and how the profession develops the workforce, knowledge and skills needed for the future. We welcome abstracts on leadership, advocacy, influencing, workforce development, pre-registration education, professional development, career pathways, service redesign, system leadership, change management, transformational change and innovative approaches to learning and development, including workforce sustainability, practitioner wellbeing, resilience, recruitment and retention.

Submission category (Type)

Choose one of the following;

Critical discourse (Abstracts only)
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References (Abstracts only)

(Required for Abstracts submission types only. Not required for Session proposals)

List the references for your abstract in the specific references box in the abstract submission system. Include citations **but not** the full references in your main body copy.

- Take all reasonable efforts to ensure referencing is in RCOT Harvard style in keeping with the Royal College's reference guidelines.
- A minimum of one reference and a maximum of five references will be accepted.
- References must be complete and correct - including full author name, date, correct full title, place of publication and publisher name.
- For journals volume, issue and page numbers must be included.
- Only include sources cited in the main body text in the reference list.
- Full references added into the specific References box in the system are not included in the word count.
- Any citations in the body of the abstract are included in the word count. If you include full references in the body of the abstract instead of in the References box, these will be included in the word count.
- Incomplete or inappropriately referenced work will be marked down by the reviewers.

See the RCOT Annual Conference Reference guidelines for more information.

Key point:
You are responsible for providing all your references details in accordance with the RCOT Harvard Reference Style.
Abstracts will not be marked down as long as you have provided all reference details and made reasonable efforts to follow the required format.

Ethical approval

Ethical approval would normally be required for all empirical research, and evidence of this should be provided. If ethical approval for the research was not required, an explanation including reference to any ethical issues should be provided.

External funding

Details of any external funding must be included for all ongoing research.

Session learning outcomes

Your submission will need to include a maximum of **two** learning outcomes relating to your session **with a maximum total of 50 words**. The learning outcomes should describe the skills or knowledge that you believe delegates will gain as a result of attending your session. This wording will be included in the programme on the Annual Conference website.

Example learning outcomes:

- Gain increased understanding of the issues facing people with learning disabilities in employment and the role of occupational therapy.
- Increase awareness of collaborative and creative research approaches in working with people with a learning disability. (37 words)

Key point:
The organisers reserve the right to edit your learning outcomes to ensure consistency and style.

RCOT Career Development Framework Pillars of Practice

Select **up to two** of the following Career Development Framework Pillars of Practice that best represent the content of your Abstract. Here are brief definitions of each of the Pillars of Practice. Find out more at **rcot.co.uk/cpd-rcot**

Pillar of practice	Definition
Professional practice:	• Maintain occupation at the centre of practice • Deliver safe, effective, person-centred and ethical practice • Use professional judgement and evidence-based critical reasoning to make decisions
Facilitating learning	• Inspire, teach, mentor, supervise and/or assess others • Facilitate practice-based and work-based learning • Access, create and evaluate contemporary learning environments, methods, tools and materials
Leadership and management	• Identify, monitor and enhance own and others' knowledge, skills and ways of thinking • Lead, guide and/or facilitate teamwork • Influence, design, plan and implement professional and/or organisational change
Research and innovation	• Access, evaluate and implement evidence to inform practice • Initiate, design, participate in and disseminate research • Engage with and influence broader socio-economic and political agendas

Level of knowledge

What level of knowledge will you be presenting? **Select one** of the following options:

- Basic general knowledge
- Basic understanding and knowledge of concepts that underpin occupational therapy
- Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts
- Factual and theoretical knowledge
- Comprehensive, factual and theoretical knowledge
- Enhanced knowledge and critical understanding
- Advanced knowledge and critical understanding
- Most advanced knowledge
- Most advanced and innovative knowledge

Book of abstracts and session proposals

We publish all successful submissions in our Book of abstracts and session proposals. Resubmit the body copy of your submission using the following guidance, so it is suitable for publication:

- Do not include session plan - what will happen in the session/anything participants will be expected to do. Do not include any resources the conference delegates will have access to/ interaction with conference delegates.
- Do not refer directly to your preferred session format.
- All citations given in the main body of the abstract must match those given in the references section.
- No longer than 250 words.
- Should not include abbreviations or acronyms.
- Should use sentence case i.e. the first letter of the sentence is capitalised, with the rest of the sentence being lower case aside for proper nouns.
- Title of accepted abstracts will be published, if your title does not meet conference style the organisers may contact you to amend.

Research (Abstracts only):

RCOT Early Researcher Award (Post-registration)

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Step eight: Data protection

Read the terms and conditions. You will need to accept these before making your submission.

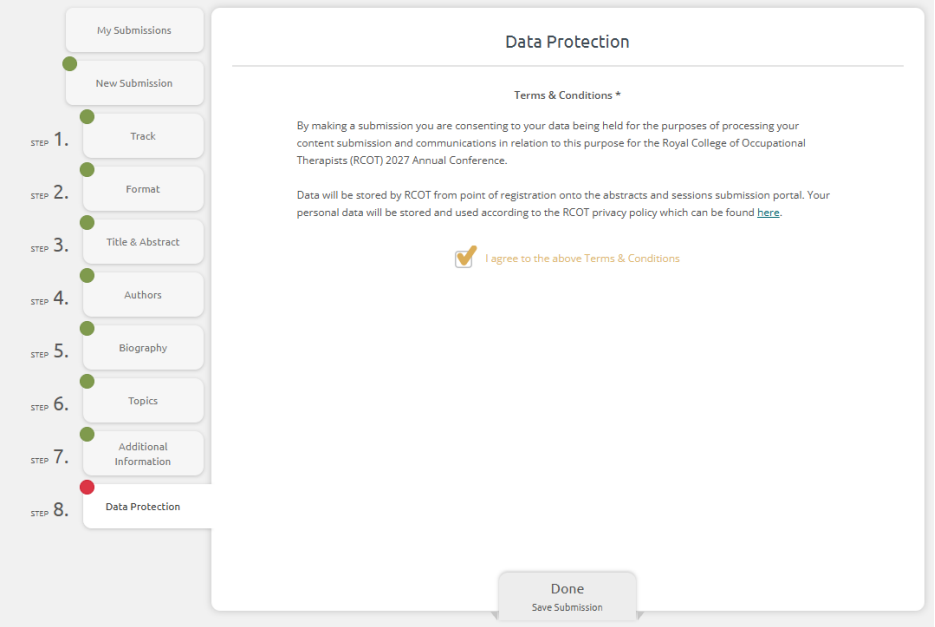

Image shows a screenshot of the Data protection step on the submission portal with a terms and conditions statement and a tick box to agree to these terms and conditions.

Before you submit: Check your submission against our marking criteria

RCOT Annual Conference 2027 marking criteria

- A submission will be rejected if it does not meet the required “Essential criteria”.
- A total score of 25 or more is required.
- Each criteria is marked out of five.

Details in the following tables

Essential criteria	Yes/No
A submission will usually be rejected if it does not meet these essential criteria:	
The submission has relevance to occupational therapy in at least one of the following areas: OT theory, practice, facilitation of learning, education, management, leadership, CPD, research.	
Evidence of ethical approval (Research category Abstracts only)	
Correct referencing (Abstracts only)	

Criteria Relevant to ALL submissions	Explanatory note	Score: 0 to 5
Language, tone and legibility.	Is the submission easily comprehensible and well presented?	
Structure.	Is the submission well structured, and includes the required information?	
Clarity of focus, purpose, background or context.	Is it clear what the authors have set out to do, and why? Authors must demonstrate how their work has taken account of the context for current political / financial / professional / educational and/or theoretical drivers locally, nationally and/or internationally.	
Clarity of method or approach to the issues under consideration. This should be considered in the context of the identified submission type and Abstract category and will be marked accordingly.	Does it include a clear outline for the content and execution of the session? This may refer to a robust research methodology, an explanation of strategies employed for creating a critical evaluation of a theory or journal article, or a credible approach to a practice analysis. It may also include a clear outline for the content and execution of a session presentation.	
Extent to which the content demonstrates professional value and impact.	Does the content have the potential to improve occupational therapy practice, education, research or service delivery? For example: • Does it demonstrate benefits for people who access services, their families and carers? • Does it demonstrate integrated working or collaborative approaches? • Does it demonstrate efficiencies or improvements in care delivery? • Does it help address inequalities or improve access, experience or outcomes? • Are the implications and impact for the profession clearly articulated?	
Extent to which the content demonstrates originality and innovation.	• Does the submission offer a fresh perspective or approach to a topic? • Does it present new ideas, learning, research, practice or service developments? • Does it challenge existing assumptions, thinking or ways of working? • Does it showcase creativity, innovation or emerging areas of practice? • Is the content likely to be of interest and relevance to the target conference audience?	

And finally...

Make sure you complete and save your final submission by the deadline. We'll keep an eye on any incomplete submissions and aim to let you know if you have any outstanding. However, it is your responsibility to submit on time.

Once the deadline has passed all submissions are sent for marking.

How are submissions marked?
All submissions we receive before the deadline are marked against the set criteria in these submissions guidelines.

When received, submissions are anonymised and each one is marked separately and independently by two reviewers. The average score is calculated to give the final score. In the unlikely event that there is a large discrepancy between a set of marks, the submission will be referred for marking by a third reviewer.

Who is reviewing the submissions?
We've got new reviewers alongside a well-established group of reviewers. The majority are respected British Journal of Occupational Therapy (BJOT) reviewers, from all areas of OT academia and practice. Any third marking is done by an RCOT Board Trustee. A list of our 2027 reviewers will be published on our website.

When will I hear if my submission is successful?
We will be marking and compiling the content in January-February 2027 and aim to let you know if you're presenting in late February.

Our panel may need to edit areas of your application and this could include the type of presentation format you use. We will contact you directly about this.

Need help?

Our events team will be on hand throughout the process to support you. Contact us at events@rcot.co.uk .Please include '**Submission query**' in your email Subject line.

Once your application and any edits to your accepted submission have been approved, we will invite you to a presenter briefing session where you will be guided through the next steps in developing and producing your presentation content and have the opportunity to ask any questions.

We look forward to receiving your submissions!